

Contact: Tracy Moehnke
Nuffer, Smith, Tucker
619-795-0703
tm@nstpr.com

CALIFORNIA DETECTIONS OF CITRUS DISEASE HUANGLONGBING UP 160 PERCENT IN 2018

Stakes at an All-Time High for California's Backyard and Commercial Trees in 2019

SACRAMENTO, Calif. – Jan. 16, 2019 – Detections of Huanglongbing (HLB), an incurable plant disease that kills citrus trees, increased by 160 percent in 2018 compared to the previous year, signaling the growing threat to the state's iconic citrus trees, landscape and economy.

HLB is spread by a small pest called the Asian citrus psyllid as it feeds on citrus tree leaves. The disease is not dangerous to humans or pets, but it is fatal for citrus trees and has no cure. Once a tree is confirmed with the disease, it must be removed from the property in order to protect neighboring citrus trees.

The disease was first discovered in California in 2012 in Hacienda Heights. HLB was detected in 269 trees in 2017 and 699 trees in 2018, with a majority of these occurring in Los Angeles and Orange counties. The disease has not yet been detected in a California commercial grove.

HLB has devastated commercial citrus production in Florida. Over the course of 10 years, Florida's commercial citrus industry lost \$7.8 billion in revenue, 162,200 citrus acres and more than 7,500 jobs due to HLB. Should the disease spread from backyard trees in Southern California to nearby commercial citrus groves, the livelihood of California's citrus production could impact about 3,900 farmers and 292,000 acres of citrus production in the state. Commercially grown citrus contributes \$7 billion in economic impact to the state and employs more than 22,000 individuals.

"The livelihood of California's commercial citrus industry and the generations of families it supports is at risk because of HLB," said Jim Gorden, a citrus grower in the San Joaquin Valley and chair of the Citrus Pest & Disease Prevention Committee. "We are at a crossroads, and we must all work together to do what is necessary to protect our citrus."

The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) has established quarantines throughout the state that limit the transport of citrus across state and international lines, and between areas where the psyllid and disease have been found. Additionally, CDFA has agriculture crews canvassing the state to inspect backyard citrus trees for the Asian citrus psyllid and HLB.

"The Department is committed to our partnership with California's commercial citrus industry and residential citrus growers to fight HLB," said Victoria Hornbaker, interim director of the citrus program at CDFA. "With more than half of California residences estimated to have a

citrus tree on their property, and California citrus production supporting billions of dollars in our state's economy, we all play an instrumental role in protecting our citrus."

California residents play an important role in protecting the state's citrus trees. Residents should:

- Proactively inspect their citrus trees for the Asian citrus psyllid and HLB monthly, and whenever watering, spraying, pruning or tending trees.
 - Adult Asian citrus psyllids are brown, about one-eighth of an inch long, and feed with their body at a 45-degree angle on citrus leaves.
 - Symptoms of HLB include blotchy and yellowing leaves, premature and excessive fruit drop, lopsided fruit, and bitter, inedible fruit.
- Call the state's pest hotline at 800-491-1899 if the pest or disease is spotted.
- Cooperate with agriculture officials who may ask to inspect or treat their citrus tree.
- As part of tree maintenance, visit a local nursery or garden center to get advice on products that can help protect citrus trees.
- When pruning citrus trees, be sure to dry out citrus clippings or double bag them before removing the plant material from the property.
- Refrain from moving citrus plants, foliage or fruit as doing this may unknowingly spread the pest.

More information and photos of Asian citrus psyllids and HLB symptoms are available at CaliforniaCitrusThreat.org.

About the Citrus Pest & Disease Prevention Program

The California Citrus Pest & Disease Prevention Program (CPDPP) is a program primarily funded by California growers and administered by the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) to fight pests and diseases threatening California citrus. Learn more at CaliforniaCitrusThreat.org.

###